DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 428 064 SP 038 350

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TITLE How We Define the Nature and Essence of Our Work in Higher Education for the 21st Century.
PUB DATE 1999-02-15
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators (Chicago, IL, February 12-16, 1999).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Faculty; *Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *Teacher Educators; *Teacher Role; *Teaching (Occupation)
IDENTIFIERS *Postmodernism

ABSTRACT

This reflective paper attempts to share and bring an emerging postmodern constructive understanding to how higher education agents define the concept of holistic work in a way that is different from the traditionally categorized notions of teaching, research, and service. Through detailed descriptions, two teacher educators (from the School of Education in College of Professional Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University) recreate the events that they have individually and collectively experienced to convey the influence these events have had on the deconstruction, reconstruction, and new construction of their roles. They advocate that to realign and acknowledge the interdependency between what educators teach, how they study, and where they serve the community is imperative in the organism of current higher education. Discussion inquiries included how teachers struggle with issues of defining and/or changing professional roles in teacher education; how teachers and institutions redefine professional roles in teacher education; how changing roles impact teachers' annual, tenure, and/or renewal evaluations of their work; and where teachers are going regarding teacher educator roles in higher education and whether they want to go there. An appendix presents the School of Education Position Statement on the Nature of Faculty Roles and Responsibilities. (Author/SM)

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How We Define the Nature and Essence of Our Work in Higher Education for the 21st Century

Eunsook Hyun & Linda Houck

Abstract

This reflective paper attempts to share and bring an emerging postmodern constructive understanding to how higher education agents define the concept of holistic work in a way that is different from the traditionally categorized notions of teaching, research, and service. Through richly detailed descriptions, the two teacher educators recreate the events that they have individually and collectively experienced to convey the influence these incidents have had on the deconstruction, reconstruction, and "newconstruction" of their roles. The authors advocate that to realign and acknowledge the interdependency between what we teach, how we study, and where we serve the community is imperative in the organism of current higher education.

Discussion Inquiries:

- How have you struggled with issues of defining and/or changing professional roles in teacher education?
- How have you and your institution redefined professional roles in teacher education?
- How do changing roles impact your annual, tenure, and/or renewal evaluations of your work?
- Where are we going regarding teacher educator roles in higher education and do we want to go there?

How We Define the Nature and Essence of Our Work in Higher Education for the 21st Century

Eunsook Hyun & Linda Houck

Postmodernism has provided us a metacognitive intellectual space where we perceive that we cannot continue as we have been (Lather, 1991, Constas, 1998). What are the contemporary social-cultural conditions under which a human act takes place, that support a person's capability to deconstruct, reconstruct, "newconstruct," and interpret new meanings of the act?

It's not often that one has the opportunity to create something new without the constraints of previous policy and procedures. It's a prospect that is both exhilarating and entails tasks one could never imagine. The two authors are involved in just such an endeavor at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), Florida's 10th state university which opened its doors on August 25, 1997.

We, the two authors, are part of the School of Education in College of Professional Studies. As a newly formed university faculty, the education faculty has been asked to create a school of education vision, mission, conceptual framework and program of studies as well as teach courses, integrate programs with field-based approaches, and develop faculty evaluation guidelines. We have also experienced the task of struggling with a multitude of "housekeeping" issues--syllabi format, numerous policies and procedures, new technology, admission criteria, and countless different forms-- all of which can sometimes demand enormous faculty time and effort, not to mention uncertainty. In these contexts, the faculty has had the opportunity to dream, create, adapt, deconstruct, and then reconstruct what they believe to be the nature of "work" in academia. This reflective paper attempts to share and bring an emerging constructive understanding of how we, as higher education faculty, define our holistic

work in a way that is different from the traditionally categorized notions of teaching, research, and service.

Institutional Conditions and Faculty Struggles

FGCU is intended to be a prototype institution of higher education for the millennium. As such, the university provides an environment of **dynamic growth and innovative change** which is reflected in teaching, curricula, community service, faculty, administration, staff, and facilities. The university affirms that **scholarship needs to be defined broadly to include areas previously undervalued**. Individual faculty members take the initiative in promoting their own growth as teachers, scholars, and, where appropriate, as practitioners (Faculty Performance Evaluation Document, FGCU, 1997). Faculty are expected to focus on **public service** activities and projects that are **primarily community-based** with the relative need being assessed with input from regional community organizations. As stated in the university mission statement, another important element of the university is the variety of alternative learning and teaching systems such as various forms of distance learning and the infusion of contemporary computer-based technology into all forms of teaching and learning.

In addition to the university mission, our School of Education is also guided by the mandate to serve the local school districts, develop professional partnership schools, and interact with other discipline-related service agencies and practitioners through action research. Given the nature of our work in the schools and community, education faculty became embroiled in a discussion of how we, as a school of education, envision the nature of our work in this new light. Many faculty members come from previous institutions that have maintained the conventional higher education practices based on

the categories of teaching, research, and service. On the contrary, these FGCU School of Education outreach endeavors were meant to meld our traditional teaching, service, and research activities.

Within these institutional conditions, education faculty's journey down the path of defining their work also came out of a need to negotiate a long and short range Professional Development Plan (PDP)* for each faculty member in conjunction with faculty evaluation. In fact, the Professional Development Plan is a "goal" oriented document and negotiated with the faculty member's supervisor (director of the School of Education). By using a goal driven document, our intention is to "let go" of traditional ideas of faculty productivity while we grapple with the difficulty or redefining our work. To many of us this was a very different task from listing courses we would teach, scholarly works we would pursue, and service we would provide to our field and the university. For instance, if an undergraduate distance learning course in assessment is taught in a local elementary school with university students assessing "real" learners in that school while sharing techniques with the school staff, is that undergraduate teaching or also staff development? Is this service to the school and indirect teaching to the staff within the school by the professor? By entering the classrooms with the university students, the professor interacts weekly with the teaching staff, the professor and the school staff grow to be more trusting of each other within the school, the school and the staff grow to be more trusting of each other within the

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* It is mandated by Florida State Faculty Activity Report. The PDP has a multi-year perspective and serve as the cornerstone for all faculty evaluation at FGCU. FGCU promotes multi-year contract instead of tenure track contract.

school community. Relationships develop and spawn opportunities for action research with the teachers. So, in this environment, the university faculty acknowledge that under the umbrella of education teaching can become service, and teaching and service can become on-going scholarly activities that would lead to integrated professional growth. We began looking at our work in an integrative fashion, with the lines between teaching, research and service blurring. We found it very difficult to fit our "work" into the nice tidy boxes of traditional faculty roles. As our education faculty struggled with defining emerging new faculty roles, our discussions brought to the surface the frustration of trying to carry out teaching, research, and service in the field.

Deconstruction and Reconstruction

Our desire to approach academia differently--to function as community based social agents who holistically craft teaching, research, scholarly activities and growth--and the diversity inherent in carrying out that philosophy are the impetus for this paper. The two authors had worked together with other education faculty to articulate a school of education position statement that would guide the faculty's work at this new institution (See appendix A). During that time we realized that our expertise was different, our cultural experiences were different, and our field placements (i.e., Professional Development School [PDS] or other social service field sites) were different. However, at the basic philosophical level that drove our work and life long learning, we are linked. Both of us and many other faculty have realized that we value and exercise a continuum of expanding our ideas and changing practice toward a

holistic approach (e.g., emerging continuum of connection-making between teaching, research, and service). Many of us employ somewhat nontraditional, evolutionary approaches to our own work.

Voices from faculty A:

The main reason that I decided to join this new higher education institution was to make a transformation of my professional practices from theory oriented to action oriented. I have always longed to get more current authentic data to uncover unknown human conditions and practices that directly affect the well being of young children and their families, particularly culturally deprived and social-economically underrepresented groups that have served as the nation's foundational labor source. These places need to be reached by the teacher educator who can deconstruct traditional limited notions of teaching and learning, who can reconstruct the notions and embrace current theory and practice, even further and more important, who can bring concrete developmentally and culturally congruent human teaching and learning practices to the classrooms aiming at equal and fair learning opportunities and experience for ALL INDIVIDUAL learners.

The site that I visit weekly is located in a typical U.S. migrant farm workers' community, and is a nonprofit non-sectarian voluntary organization committed to the provision of quality child care services for young children and to the advocacy of issues relevant to the lives of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and the rural poor in general. All the children live in poverty in that area.** The migrant farmworkers' village is located near Fort Myers and Naples, FL--which has been recognized as one of the nation's best resort areas and, thus, it is known as one of the most segregated cities in the U.S.

After the first two visits and talking with children, teachers, center coordinators, and community outreach workers, I had a desperate need to see the place called "the village." I decided to visit the children's home village. I felt it would help me to see a clearer and bigger picture of who they are, how they live, how they see themselves and all aspects of the culture. The things that I saw, the things that I heard, the things that I observed .. it is.. I cannot find the words to accurately convey what I have seen and heard. Language is socially, culturally, and historically shaped arbitrary cognitive sound making and symbolic representation. There are no English words that I

Voices from faculty B:

Without realizing it the nature of my work as a professor was drastically changing. I looked forward to the time I spent at the school. As I began piloting new internship models there, teaching a class on site that included time in the classroom to practice what we were discussing that day, meeting with teachers to plan conference presentations based on ideas that we germinated together, participating in the teacher assistance team as a member assigned to a case, attending grade level team meetings, helping the staff to implement the new literacy curriculum and then develop practical ways to assess, watching and collecting data on the professional development of the teachers in the school, it became clear to me that my role as a professional from the university was very different from what it had been just a few years ago and certainly different from many of my colleagues. My teaching impacted the school, the school impacted how I taught. The learning conversations opened new ideas for myself and the staff that allowed us to construct new understandings of our relationship together. Isn't that service, research, and teaching? Where does one begin and the other end? It was becoming increasingly difficult to fit my duties into nice neat little boxes.

The nature of my work has become field-based and centered around the daily life in this elementary school. I teach in a school and must once again work around the schedules of children and teachers. I serve in a school and feel that my experiences are also a service to me. I study in a school and it's a powerful community to watch and learn within. My research is an opportunity to collaborate with those in "the trenches" and see how the questions we pose and the answers we may propose better the educational climate of the school, the children and their families, my university students, and the work of others beyond our learning conversation.

My experiences are so very different from my colleague. I am in what many would consider to be a "privileged" school. It was built as a professional development school and the teachers on staff knew what the expectations were before the school opened. In addition, it is considered a very middle class **Voices**

Voices from faculty A continued	**from a faculty A continued**
know of to describe what I saw, how they educate children, how they live, how they help each other to survive day-to-day life. From a social constuctivist's points of view, it was so clear that I had to make some changes in all my aspects of educational work which includes the traditional notions of teaching, research, and service. These emerging and immersing experiences are reshaping my work in these social-cultural contexts. I know I have to change my research focus to one that would be beneficial to these children and their families. I have to deconstruct and reconstruct my teaching because I am preparing early childhood education teachers who will be working with children from this area and, I also have to re-orient and make some new orientations to my service. I have come to realize that my previous scholarly institutionalized orientations are culturally incongruent to this context I have experienced.	school---not so much by design as by geographic school boundaries. The surprising thing is the impact the school environment has had on my notion of the nature of my work. I am far more than a liaison between the school and university and I am certainly more than the university supervisor for our interns there. My work at and for FGCU is centered in this school with the teachers, children, and their families. It is clear to me that the environment in which I work is socially constructing my role. The needs and demands of the school community have greatly changed how I present course content, think about teaching, and what is important in the business of schooling.

Note: ** In April 1997, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) reported that the poverty rate among farmworkers has increased from 47 to 61% in just a few years. Among legal immigrants and citizens, only 20% of farmworkers use Medicaid and Food Stamps; 11 % used WIC and only 5% received cash assistance (Farmworker Justice News, 1997).

Since the university affirms us to work broadly to include areas previously undervalued in higher education and to be focused primarily on community-based and public service-based activities, the institution respects our diversified forms of on-going academic activities. Faculty are encouraged to devote at least one day per week to work in a professional development school (PDS) or a discipline-related social service agency. We do not go into a school or a field site to fix things, be the expert, or do our research. We go there to learn, to be part of learning conversations where we can link our work to practice within an authentic environment. We have transformed ourselves as social agents from higher education who are willing to learn about and work for the community, and can clearly articulate the connection among community needs, grounded research, and culturally congruent in-service and preservice teacher education. The process of *deconstruction* arises when we perceive that we cannot

continue as we have been. Our *reconstruction* occurs when we begin to realize that our role can encompass richer experiences than those engaged in by the conventional professors (i.e., a professor with a pre-planned research agenda).

Toward "Newconstruction"

As other faculty have struggled with their roles, we--the two suthors-- were repeatedly asked by them: "What do you do at these schools all day?" We answered, "First of all, it has taken time to become familiar with the school cultures and 'build trust'." Some look at us in dismay and cannot fathom what we mean. Others try to imagine how that could enhance our university "agenda." We believe that it is critical to learn the culture of the school, try to be part of the organism's "everyday-school-dialogue," watch and listen for concerns dealing with practice and curricula issues, assist with the regular home-visit program with the community outreach workers, and provide services for problem solving at the individual child, classroom, school, community, and sometimes district level.

Our day at each school begin with a "status check" with either the school principal or curriculum coordinator. From there we engage in a variety of activities. The following section highlights emerging thoughts and examples of what we do and how we define the nature and essence of our work in higher education. Both of us share our own thoughts and reflections on specific incidents which lead to our emerging "newconstruction" of university faculty performances. These vignettes attempt to represent a rich insight into the breadth and depth of our field-based performance.

In working with a public professional development school site:

There is a creative energy when I meet with the curriculum specialist. We now have a common language and a common school culture. We discuss issues such as the new literacy curriculum, staff development, future curriculum planning, and the teacher assistance team. Over time, our learning conversations have moved to projects of common interest. Very often these conversations are a spring board for other ideas such as ways to utilize interns, ideas for tapping school staff in site based undergraduate classes, and ideas for research projects and grants.

I asked two first grade teachers if they and their students would like to be pen pals with my university students enrolled in an early literacy class. Both the first graders and the FGCU students looked forward to hearing from their pen pal. My students used these letters to examine growth in the writing of the young student over the semester. My university class went to meet their pen pals at the elementary school at the end of the semester. Both groups were wary of their new found friends at first, but after reading together, sharing stories, having lunch, and just listening both groups went away with a better understanding of letters and friendship far beyond analyzing examples of writing.

I visit many classrooms and feel comfortable doing so. Teachers share stories of learning that depict young children discovering literacy. I watch instruction and interact with the children in small groups. Most importantly, I see craft knowledge in action.

I must arrange other interactions between early writers and university students. I'll incorporate the new literacy curriculum into our on-site assessment class. I hope to structure my on-site classes to model theory to practice. For instance, we'll discuss shared reading, immediately observe first grade teachers' engaged in a shared reading activity, talk about what the university students saw and later that class period have the teachers come to class to discuss their "craft." I'm learning that my role is not to lecture but to facilitate many experiences connected to content.

In working with a non-profit social agency site:

The program coordinator and I briefly talk about the things that have happened the past week and we discuss current concerns including curriculum matters, staff development series for promoting teachers' self-esteem, teachers' creative response to conflict, awareness and critical techniques for home visiting, etc., community issues that directly have affected the young

children and their families' well being (i.e., hunger strike for wage increase, issues of pesticides without providing a notification nor a safety awareness).

Classroom teachers and I talk about many things from the physical needs of the children to methodology. Who is missing or ill? How long? Why? How can the teacher use the centers for integrated learning experiences for all young children including special needs, or diverse language and ethnic backgrounds? In classrooms, I sometimes model creative approaches to respond to young children's basic needs. One day, when I went into one of the 3-4 years old classrooms, everyone was busy finishing their lunch, and at the same time preparing for nap time. There was one girl who was crying very hard without any teachers' direct attention. I approached her and initiated a dialogue but did not get a response from her. At that moment the two teachers came to me and said, "She always cries as soon as she finishes her lunch and sees people preparing for nap time. She will not understand you if you speak in English because she only speaks Spanish." The teachers had begun to say to the children, "It's nap time. Go to your place and sleep. Shhhh! Shhhh! Go to sleep." The little girl continued to cry even harder. It is the first time that she has been in a school setting and within a different language context so she found it very difficult to go to sleep without her mother. I took the child to her nap place as she continued to cry. I held one of her hands and rubbed her back with my the other hand while I tried many different ways (reading, talking, offering stuffed animal or dolls, etc.) to comfort her. Finally, I began to sing a lullaby in my home language, which is neither English nor Spanish. I quickly realized that everyone in the classroom was listening to my Korean lullaby including the child who was no longer crying. I haven't heard any "shhhs" since then. The child who used to hold my hand tightly when she was crying, has finally let my hands go. Afterwards, the teachers and I talked about using music, somewhat new or a different sounds in various contexts, and creating environment and curriculum that are responsive to the young children's cognitive and emotional developmental characteristics. This experience also has become an another authentic example that I bring it into my teacher preparation contexts.

The community outreach worker and I talk about the next home visit plan. We discuss when we will be visiting, what types of service we will be providing for the family. We check various aspects of their home conditions: Which home language do they use? ? How many families are living in that one house unit (usually two to three)? How many young children are living in the house (usually 5 –6)? Do they have a bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, bed(s), or telephone etc.? Not many houses have a telephone and in some cases the mother does not know how to use it if there is one. Does the mother know how to get to the clinic? Do they have transportation? Does the

mother know how to read the doctor's prescription? Does the mother know how to read the directions for the child's medication? To most of us these are basic skills but to many of these families there is no (or a very little) understanding. The other day, when we were visiting one home, we found a four-year-old child who had not been to school for almost two weeks and she had an ulcer around her mouth and on her tongue. The mother told us that, since early last week, the child had been complaining she was hungry but could not eat anything because of the pain. The mothers said, "Finally yesterday I took her to the doctor and got the medication." The mother did not remember how much of the medication she had given to the child. The outreach worker was simply making a note of what the mother was saying to us because in her work this scenario is not unusual. However I felt that I needed to see that child because I was concerned about the child's dehydration. When I saw the child she was very pale and lying in bed asleep. With the help of outreach worker's Spanish translation that afternoon I spent time showing the mother how to make a soft water bottle and then how to use it with the child as well as make sure that the mother followed the correct medication directions.

It was a new, unexpected, learning experience. Who am I in this context? What was I doing? Is this teaching, service, or field research? Do you see this type of researcher's role in any traditional research format? Where can I put this experience into the faculty professional development plan and evaluation? In which category? Is it research as a qualitative ethnography? Is it teaching as parent education? Is it service as field-based staff development and collaboration? The experiences that I have had are greater than the traditional three categories of academia.

In the middle of these experiences, I am integrating the richness of what I see and do into my current university teaching contexts. Through my mind is a running dialog with myself. "I should talk about this in my Early Childhood Education Integrated Curriculum for Social Science, Humanities, and Arts course. I should use this vignette as an example of developmentally and culturally appropriate practices (DCAP) in my Programs for Young Children course. I should arrange an on-site class for my students enrolled in Creative and Affective Experiences for Young Children, when I deliver the in-service workshop on DCAP creative physical arrangement. The program coordinator and I need to develop an interdisciplinary grant proposal to promote their outreach worker's home-visit program. I should also contact other university faculty who are interested in this type of project, especially faculty from nursing and social work departments. At the end of the first semester, we look back and find out that many facets of our work has been a response to those emergent thoughts.

Our experiences and the resultant emergent thoughts have led both of us to deconstruct and reconstruct our university professor role and "newconstruct" it in a more holistic way that includes our role as a social service agent in the field. By doing so, we also deconstruct, reconstruct and "newconstruct" our teaching content to emphasize an authentic field-based and culturally congruent perspective while we construct collaborative projects with other needed disciplines for that learning community's needs. In these contexts, we have begun to acknowledge that we recursively deconstruct, reconstruct, and "newconstruct" our knowledge and practice derived from our own emerging experience and unique ways of making sense of the process. Our professional roles change accordingly to reflect the needs of our learning community.

Final Remarks

Both of us pursued graduate study, which emphasized the role of constructivist learning and its place in education. The underlying beliefs and philosophical bases for our work were examined in light of postmodern thought. "Postmodernism regards the world as an organism rather than as a machine, the earth as a home rather than as a functional possession, and person as interdependent rather than as isolated and independent" (Salttery, 1995, p.19). Because of our lived experiences we have come to see the close interdependent relationship between what we teach, how we study, and where we serve the community. We come from a postmodern holistic stance and the traditional boxes--teaching, research, and service-- have felt cumbersome for some time. The deeply interdependent phenomena of our practice makes it difficult for us to

articulate our work into the three categories. The "stories" of our professional lives that we have shared indicate that our teaching, professional commitment, and practice require nonconventional faculty evaluation guidelines which are different from the three categories of teaching, research, and service.

As a result of our current field based experiences it is clear that "tradition" is too mechanical and superficial and uncomfortable if we try to fit the ever changing culture of our work into the traditional categories. The fixed categories only allow us to be "blind" practitioners with a limited and narrowed mind set in the field. We acknowledge that each of us has unique immersing experiences through our emergent field-based practices. Acknowledging, supporting, and institutionally responding to diverse teacher educators' holistic educational practices are imperative. It is hoped that our story will serve as a point of departure for continued dialogue, discussion, and debate regarding postmodern ways of defining the nature and essence of our work in higher education.

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Appendix A

School of Education Position Statement on the Nature of Faculty Roles and Responsibilities

"People's hopes, dreams, and identities are embedded in their communities; not merely locked in their individual bodies and minds. They learn in service of these hopes, dreams, and identities; they learn in order to enhance their participation in their communities." (p.1)

A New Learning Agenda, Institute for Research on Learning, 1993

As a School of Education, our mission is to advance the quality of education. That call goes far beyond merely "teaching," which is defined as "directing or giving lessons." Education's Latin root means "to bring forth or to develop the knowledge or skill." Education then requires that we nurture, inspire, guide, and support a community of learners that includes students, faculty, staff, families, and other community partners. Our educational pursuits within these communities may come to be defined in eclectic formats and designation of faculty effort may evolve into arrangements unique to the varied community members.

We define our mission in our learning community in an integrated sense. That is, education is in itself broadly defined and in the arena of our work, it is one with scholarship and service. We acknowledge that these three notions are inseparable in our practices. The over-arching belief is that all that we do contributes to an ever-changing community of learners and encompasses discovery, interaction, new knowledge, action research, service to constituents, facilitation of learning, and collaboration. As professional educators we value and will be recognized for multiple approaches to the exploration of knowledge and to the integration of that knowledge with practice.

The implementation of education, scholarship, and service, reflects diversity while:

- demonstrating responsibility for enhancing university mission and goals;
- encouraging ongoing reflection of practices and excellence;
- supporting sensitivity to diversified professional growth and productivity over a lifetime; and
- responding to changing constituencies.

Although we can define education, scholarship, and service individually, the collective power and synergy of the three is greater than the elements viewed separately and each one enhances the others; therefore we view our professional activities holistically. The manner in which an individual would define a Professional Development Plan would be unique and would acknowledge this holistic relationship. Actions, therefore, will be distinctive rather than imitative and assessment will be molded by this position statement.